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A Study of Practices and Trends in Promotion of Pupils in City School Systems

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**A STUDY OF
PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN PROMOTION
OF
PUPILS IN CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS**

**by
WILLIAM A. MANSON**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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1945

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the St. Louis school report for 1871-1872, Superintendent W. T. Harris wrote, "The constant danger of all graded systems is that they are liable to become Procrustes' beds". He urged a shorter length of time between promotion periods in order to keep the school organization "elastic and mobile". Following his lead, many cities adopted the policy of more frequent promotions to achieve greater flexibility in administrative machinery. Most of them shifted to a semi-annual plan in which promotions are made in the middle and at the end of each school year.

By an ordinance of the City Council, Norfolk established a system of free public schools in 1850. When the State of Virginia established a system of public schools in 1870, the city of Norfolk was one of three cities in the State that already had in operation a system of public education. And in the year 1871 there were 16 teachers and 865 pupils in the free schools of the city. The city expended \$11,472.76 on its schools during that year.^{1/}

^{1/} Squires, W. H. T. Through the Years in Norfolk.
Norfolk Advertising Board, Norfolk, Virginia. 1936.

The ideas expressed by Superintendent Harris of St. Louis seemed to have reached Norfolk, even though they had taken about forty years in doing so, for on August 30, 1910, a "colled" session of the School Board of the City of Norfolk met in the Board Room, Paul-Gale-Greenwood Building. ^{2/} The meeting was called by Superintendent H. A. Dobie to consider a set of twelve regulations that had been prepared by the Committee on Teachers and Textbooks, as a result of considerable study of school problems made by Supervisor, J. Paul Spence. Dr. L. T. Royster was chairman of the Board and the full membership (nine) was present as well as Supervisors Spence and Rydingsvard. Proposed regulation number one provided for adoption of semi-annual promotions. The complete regulation is as follows:

"Promotions of pupils to higher grades or classes shall be of two kinds, regular and special. Regular promotions shall be made at the close of each school half-year; all other promotions shall be special, and shall be made whenever, in the judgment of the teacher, principal, and Supervisor of Instruction, the progress of the pupil may justify it. Many pupils may profitably skip half a year occasionally, and no pupil should be kept in a grade longer than two years."

The above regulation and the eleven others dealing with methods of marking pupils, examinations, principals' and teachers' report forms were all unanimously adopted.

^{2/} Minutes of School Board of City of Norfolk, Va. 1910. page 259.

Typewritten copies of this set of regulations were requested for each member of the Board at its regular meeting on October 11, 1910.

The day after the School Board adopted the regulation changing to semi-annual promotions, the Norfolk newspaper, Virginian-Pilot, carried a rather long news item, in which the situation that probably caused the action of the Board was stated as follows: ^{3/}

WORKING RULES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AND RADICALLY REVISED

"School Trustees Are Displeased With
Many Failures At High School And Order
Inquiry Into Cause of The Trouble"

"Teaching Force Not Ample, Says Spence"

"Radical revision of rules for marking pupils of the public schools was made yesterday by the city school board, supplanting bodily the present system under the operation of which together with other defective parts there has been an amazing number of failures, particularly in the high school. The new rules, while touching the heart of the free school system significantly, are not alone expected to cure the conditions revealed in failure statistics prepared by Principal Bain - of the high school, and by Supervising Instructor Spence. The disease is organic in the high school according to the opinion of Mr. Spence, and can only be remedied completely by increase in the teaching faculty so that longer recitation periods, now thirty minutes, may be provided. Also he believes, some of the high school courses are too crowded. . . ."

Grammar Schools Better Off -

^{3/} Virginian-Pilot; Vol. XXVI, No. 57:
Norfolk, Virginia, Wednesday, Aug. 31, 1910.

In Mathematics 315 Failed

"The teachers and textbook committee having gone into the matter of failures at the high school and reported in favor of investigating the cause, the school board yesterday directed Mr. Spence to confer with Principal Bain and Assistant Principal Cannon. The most startling of the statistics of failure is in the department of mathematics of the high school where 315 out of a total of 534 pupils failed last year. In this department 219 pupils passed, while 315 were unsuccessful.

"To a less material degree the same is true in the elementary schools. Last year in the Seventh grades of the white schools there were 275 promotions and 83 failures.

"Mr. Spence working with the teachers and textbooks committee since his going into office a year ago, thinks the percentage of failures too high, but he did not lay the whole or greater part of the cause on the plan of marking; but rather to insufficiency of the teaching force at the high school and to lack of what he termed individual teaching, both at the high school and in the elementary grades.

"One provision of the new rules which though effective in the grammar grades will have its most telling effect in the high school, where class work does not at present influence the pupil's mark, is as follows: Stated examinations shall be held for pupils whose class mark does not entitle them to exemption, in January and in June and at such other times as may be necessary; but these examinations shall not be considered as alone determining the standing of such pupils. Their standing in any subject shall be determined by their class work together with the examination, the average of the class work being added to the examination mark and the sum divided by two. If a pupil is excused from an examination on any subject his standing for the term on that subject shall be determined by averaging the monthly grades or averages."

The regulation in regard to semi-annual promotion has remained in effect in Norfolk until the present time.

CHAPTER II

INVESTIGATION AND COLLECTION OF DATA

At a meeting of the Principals' Association in November 1944, Mr. E. S. Brinkley, Superintendent of Schools, brought up the question of the wisdom of abolishing semi-annual promotions in the Norfolk city school system. After some discussion in regard to what the trend and practice of promotion was among the large city school systems in the United States at that time, the subject was postponed until further study could be made.

Purpose of Study

As a result of what happened at the meeting mentioned above, this study was planned. The problem was to make a study of practices and trends in promotion of pupils in city school systems.

To solve this problem the writer undertook to find what the present promotion practices are; to learn what plans are used when changes are made from one practice of promotion to another; and to evaluate the promotion practices in use, by reference to current educational literature.

Plan of Investigation

The writer formed a committee of which he became chairman and two other principals agreed to serve on the committee. They were: Mr. W. L. Harrell of the Larchmont Elementary School and Mr. E. L. Lamberth of

the Granby High School. The Program Chairman of the Principals' Association, Mr. W. J. S. Truitt, placed the report on the program for the February professional meeting of the Principals' Association.

It was decided to investigate the promotion practices in cities that would compare in size with that of Norfolk, Virginia. In 1940 Norfolk's population was 144,532 but in the past three years it had increased so rapidly that the estimates had placed its population over 200,000. In view of this fact it was decided to include all cities whose population lay between 100,000 and 250,000. To check the national trend with that of city school systems of Virginia, all urban school systems in the Commonwealth were included in the study.

The information desired from these school systems was: (1) what plan of pupil promotion was being used, (2) was the plan being used adopted in recent years (the past six), (3) if a change in promotion plan had been made in the past six years, what was the previous plan used, and (4) if a change had been made, why the change had been made.

To secure this information, a questionnaire was prepared to be answered by the superintendent of schools, since information from the superintendent's office would be as accurate and dependable as any available.

After the questionnaires had been returned the information was to be tabulated or listed and checked with information gotten from up-to-date educational writers in professional books, journals, magazines, monographs and lectures.

It was found that the two most recent studies of the problem of promotion in city schools were the National Education Association, Research Division's study made in 1938, and one made by the School Policies Council of the Denver Public Schools, Denver, Colorado, in 1941. An analysis of these two studies follows in their respective order:

The National Education Association,

Research Division's Study, Nov. 1938.^{1/}

By 1930, city school systems could be classified into two groups with reference to promotion periods, namely: those which had annual promotions and those which promoted semi-annually. The 1921 Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association (now the American Association of School Administrators) reported data from 555 school systems on promotion in elementary schools, which showed that smaller cities preferred the

^{1/} Promotion Policies in City School Systems, National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, Circular No. 9, November 1938. 1201 Sixteenth Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.

annual plan while in 75 per cent of the cities over 30,000 in population, the semi-annual plan prevailed. Over one-fifth of the cities reporting stated that they had made a change during the past ten years and seven per cent stated that they contemplated a change from present practice. About half of these completed or proposed changes were from annual to semi-annual promotions; the other half were from the semi-annual to the annual plan.^{2/}

That the problem remained an unsolved one in 1938 was shown by the number of requests received by the Educational Research Service of the National Education Association for data on promotion practices. In order to answer these inquiries the Research Division circulated a questionnaire in June 1938, asking for information on current procedures in cities over 30,000 in population according to the 1930 census. The inquiry was sent also to the 103 city school systems below 30,000 in population which subscribed to the Educational Research Service.^{3/}

Replies to this questionnaire were received from 83, or 80.3 per cent of the 94 cities over 100,000 in

^{2/} National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, Five Unifying Factors in American Education. Ninth Yearbook. Washington, D. C. 1932 p. 65.

^{3/} Promotion Policies in City School Systems, National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, Circular No. 9, November 1938. 1201 Sixteenth Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.

population; from 199, or 84.3 per cent of the 236 school systems in cities of 30,000 to 100,000 in population; and from 84, or 81.5 per cent of the 103 school systems in the smaller cities.

The 366 city school systems which replied to the inquiry, when considered as a group, were almost equally divided on the question of annual and semi-annual promotion policies. Of the entire number that reported, 96.7 per cent reported one of these two plans; 48.9 per cent annual and 47.8 per cent semi-annual. There were differences, however, when city size is considered. Almost two-thirds of the larger cities favored the semi-annual plan. Cities from 30,000 to 100,000 in population were more evenly divided, with 90 systems, or 45.2 per cent, reporting annual promotions and 102 systems, or 51.3 per cent, semi-annual. Among the smaller cities the annual plan was predominant, being reported by 77.4 per cent of 84 school systems. Of the twelve school systems which reported a "Combination or other" policy, nine had both annual and semi-annual promotions.

In answer to the question, "Was the policy adopted in the past five years?", 68 systems, or 18.5 per cent said "yes". The proportion reporting recent change was largest in cities of population under 30,000 (22.6 per cent), and smallest in cities of population over 100,000 (12.0 per cent). Nevertheless the evidence of change among the

large cities is significant, since their administrative policies are presumably more stable than in smaller cities. Of the ten cities reporting change, three were then in a transition stage.

Most of the 63 school systems that had changed within the five year period had abandoned semi-annual promotions in favor of the annual plan. Ten had changed their semi-annual policy to a combination or continuous promotion plan. The only adoption of the semi-annual plan within the five year period occurred in three city school systems, two of which were abandoning the quarterly plan.

Several school officials expressed themselves as being dissatisfied with their present policy of promoting semi-annually and were inclined to favor annual promotions. A few indicated that there was no disposition to change from their present policy of semi-annual promotions.

Procedures in Change Of Policy - Several replies described the method used in changing from semi-annual to an annual plan of promotion. In most cases the transfer was progressive, beginning with the kindergarten and primary grades and gradually extending to the upper grades and high school. In some instances the transfer was complete in three years, while in others the plan was extended each year to include another grade.

A less common procedure provided that "B" sections of classes cover the essentials of three semesters' work

in two semesters, so that all sections would be on the annual promotion schedule within a year. One system arranged to have pupils in the lower-half sections complete four semesters' work in three. Special adjustment classes were provided for irregular classes and individual pupil adaptations.

Advantages And Disadvantages Of Annual And Semi-Annual Promotions Listed - Among the reasons advanced for changing from semi-annual to annual promotions were: improved pupil-teacher relationships, continuity of the educational program, ease of administration, and elimination of small classes.

The mid-year promotion plan, it is claimed, makes it more difficult for teachers to understand the needs of pupils, since in most cases teachers receive new groups of pupils twice a year. Class routine is disrupted and the efficiency of pupils and teachers greatly lowered. Not only is unnecessary time consumed in term testing and reporting, schedule-making, deciding individual promotion problems, distributing instructional materials, etc., but there is a more serious waste of time for pupils while teachers are trying to learn the individual characteristics and abilities of new pupils in order to plan for their individual needs. The elimination of the mid-year promotional period will permit uninterrupted study and educational growth during the weeks now

devoted to closing one term and beginning another.

The most frequent argument for mid-year promotions has been that a pupil who fails, repeats a half-year's work only. However, it is claimed that some teachers have tended to unload their problem pupils at mid-year instead of studying their needs and possibly preventing failure. The fact that a pupil who fails under an annual promotion system must repeat a year's work should have the double effect of making the teacher more vigilant regarding the beginnings of failure during the year and more reluctant to hold a child back if there is a chance of his being able to do the work of the next grade.

The claim cited in the preceding paragraph, that mid-year promotions reduce the burden of failure, is answered by those who point out that the semi-annual plan with its mid-year entering classes increases the amount of failure. The superintendent of the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, where the annual plan is now favored, reported the results of a comparative study over a period of years from the records of entrants in February and September. ^{4/} He summarizes as follows:

"There is a greater percentage of failure in mid-year groups. In twelve years there has been only one exception to this. A study of the

4/ Promotion Policies in City School Systems.
National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, Circular No. 9, November 1933, page 6. 1201 Sixteenth Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.

graduates of the years 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, including 2195 members shows two and one-third times as many failures among mid-year entrants as among those entering in September. (In 1929 we had three times as many failures in United States History among those who had the extra semester to repeat the subject as among those who would not have graduated if they had failed.)

There is a greater number of withdrawals from school in the mid-year groups, and of those who withdraw a larger number are failing at the time of withdrawal than of those who withdraw among the September entrants."

The claim that annual promotions favor the slow child and retard the brilliant one by making double promotions less likely is denied by several school officials, who say that, present-day practice encourages an enriched curriculum for the better student rather than hurrying him through. One reply stated that children are not permitted to skip grades, since experience has shown that such promotions usually expose a child at some time in his school career to a grade for which he is not matured.

A number of administrators point to financial saving achieved through the elimination of small classes and mid-year disorganization. Some contend that fewer teachers are needed.

Several replies indicated that mid-year classes are unpopular. Mid-year classes graduate in January, a difficult time to find employment and not a suitable time to start a college course. Many mid-year high school graduates continue in high school to the end of the year. In

one school system approximately 90 per cent of the students finishing high school in mid-year remain another semester, thereby increasing teacher-load, crowding the classes, and adding to the expense. Another system reported that 74.6 per cent of the mid-year entrants stretch their high school education to four and one-half years.

Other advantages of the annual promotion plan that were occasionally listed are: Teachers can arrange their units of work so that they are sequential and developmental. The same number of subject offerings can be made available to all students. The keeping of records is simplified and made more effective. Large groups entering the same grade in September will permit a greater measure of homogeneous grouping.

In explaining why they changed from a policy of semi-annual promotions to an annual plan, many school officials have assumed that mid-year admissions are eliminated along with semi-annual promotions. Their criticism of the semi-annual plan accordingly stresses the difficulties encountered by mid-year beginners. Just as first-graders who enter in February are beginning to learn to read and are becoming adjusted to the school environment, it is time for summer vacation. In September it is necessary to begin anew. Similar difficulties are mentioned in connection with certain high school courses in mathematics and languages.

The semi-annual promotion plan also has its defenders.

One school administrator whose system has had this plan saves money by preventing failing students from repeating a full year; he states, that fewer pupils drop out through discouragement; that truancy is lessened; that in high school, if a pupil cannot succeed in a particular study he loses only a half-year, since ample offerings enable him to take another subject the next semester. Most of the arguments in favor of the semi-annual plan stress the point that half-year failures or retardations are of less injury to the child than failures on the yearly basis. Another point is that more of the abler students receive rapid promotion, since it is easier to double-promote.

Several, otherwise in favor of semi-annual promotions, have changed to the annual plan due to steadily decreasing enrollments in the elementary schools which make mid-year classes impracticable.

Special Provisions For Individual Adjustments - Several replies expressed the opinion that merely to change the interval between regular promotions was of little significance in terms of pupil growth. The argument for the semi-annual plan has been flexibility; yet as typically administered the semi-annual promotional plan seems to be little, if any, better than the annual plan, while more difficult and expensive to administer. Saving of time is another purpose of semi-annual promotion, but many educators believe that ability grouping, trial promotions, and varied

curricula in an annual promotion plan are more effective as a means to rapid progress. Flexibility may be achieved better through adapting instruction to individual needs within the classroom for the period of a year. Skipping a half-grade may not accomplish as much as giving the maximum of enrichment in a grade.

In reporting present practice, several school officials stated that special adjustments were made during the term.

For one school system with a semi-annual policy the superintendent stated that with them it was not so much a matter of semi-annual promotions as of semi-annual entry.

Denver School Policies Council Study
 5/
 Denver, Colorado, July 28, 1941

A committee appointed by the School Policies Council of the Denver Public Schools was assigned the following problem: "Promotion of Pupils on the Annual Basis versus the Semi-annual Basis". The Department of Research and Vocational Education co-operated in the study and circulated questionnaires to 68 northern cities of 100,000 population or more. Replies were received from 62, or 91 per cent of these cities. The inclusion of Denver (population 322,412 in 1940) made a total of 63 cities

5/ Promotion of Pupils on The Annual Basis versus The Semi-Annual Basis. Denver Public Schools Department of Research and Vocational Education, Denver, Colorado, July 28, 1941.

reported on in this study.

The replies were summarized in two tables. Table I listed 37 cities in which the plan of semi-annual promotions was used, together with the comments from these cities as to the advantages and disadvantages of both semi-annual and annual promotions. Denver was included in this table since it had semi-annual promotions.

Table II listed 26 cities which had annual promotions or modifications of same, together with the comments as to the advantages or disadvantages of the plan of annual promotions as they are experienced in these cities.

In both tables, the cities have been arranged according to population, from largest down to the smallest. This was done in order to ascertain whether or not annual or semi-annual promotions seemed to be more expedient in the larger or smaller cities, as the case might be.

It was found that 26 or 41 per cent of the 63 cities reporting had annual promotions or a modification of same, and 37 cities or 59 per cent of the cities had semi-annual promotions. Of the 26 cities with a population of 250,000 or more, only 5 cities or 19 per cent use the plan of annual promotions or a modification of same. Of the 37 cities with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 people, 21 or 57 per cent use the plan of annual promotions or a modification of same. Of the 37 cities using the plan of semi-annual promotions, 4 cities, Minneapolis, Kansas City,

(Mo.), Providence, and Worcester, indicated the possibility of changing to the plan of annual promotions. This is exclusive of Denver, where the study had just been started.

Comments from the city of Boston, Massachusetts are a bit different and for that reason are quoted as follows:

"There is no provision for mid-year promotion in the Boston (population 1930 was 791,188) schools. Some few years ago, on request of the Superintendent, a study was made by the head masters of high schools, for the purpose of determining the advantages and disadvantages of mid-year promotion systems. The study showed the plan to be quite general in the West but rather unpopular in the East. It was not adopted for the Boston schools. It is, of course, within the discretion of the principal to promote a child in mid-year if it seems that such a promotion is desirable, but in general it would not be deemed for the best interest of the child.

"What is known as the 'year-unit' plan was adopted for all high schools in September 1934, and made applicable to all freshmen subjects, all senior subjects, and all classes in English over the four years. The plan has been eminently successful".

In reply to a personal letter from the writer Mr. Charles E. Greene, Superintendent of Denver Public Schools, stated their position as of that date, November 21, 1944, as follows:

"Our School Policies Council recently voted in favor of changing from a semi-annual promotion plan to an annual plan, beginning September, 1945. The Superintendent informed them that he would not permit any such change unless it came at the initiative of the parents, and particularly of parents of the younger children not yet in school. At the present time a committee is working on the problem of setting up standards for admitting the younger children to the first grade or to the kindergarten. Whether or not the schools will be ready to start the new plan in September, 1945, is questionable."

Report of Study of Promotional Practices Made
by Committee of Principals of Norfolk, Virginia
November 1944

To make this study applicable to the city of Norfolk, Virginia, and to bring the data already collected in the two preceding studies, up to date, the questionnaire (Appendix A) was mailed on November 29, 1944, to each school superintendent of a city school system whose city population in 1940 census, ranged between 100,000 and 250,000. These population limits were selected in order to compare with that of Norfolk's 144,332 in the federal census of 1940, but which in the past several years has increased so rapidly that it was variously estimated to be near 250,000 in 1944.

There were 54 cities between these population limits listed in the federal census report of 1940; the range of the questionnaires covered 23 States; and replies were received from 52 of these 54 cities, or 96.3 per cent of the questionnaires sent out were returned by the office of the superintendent or the superintendent himself. All questionnaires returned before February 1, 1945 are included in the report.

A detailed report of questionnaire responses, with cities listed according to States arranged alphabetically, follows:

Cities Reporting Annual Plan -

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Population in 1940</u>	<u>Was plan adopted before 1938 or since? 6/</u>	<u>Why change was made, if made since 1938</u>
1. Long Beach, Cal.	164,271	Since	a. Better guidance b. More economical c. Students generally do not like to graduate in mid-year
2. Sacramento, Cal.	105,958	Before	. . . . . 7/
3. San Diego, Cal.	203,341	Since	. . . . .
4. Hartford, Conn.	166,267	Before	. . . . .
5. New Haven, Conn.	160,605	Before	. . . . .
6. Wilmington, Del.	112,504	Since	Efficiency of instruction and economy
7. Jacksonville, Fla.	173,065	Since	. . . . .
8. Miami, Florida	172,172	Since	Semi-annual promotions entail too many changes and no real good purpose is served thereby
9. Tampa, Florida	108,391	Since	More efficient administration (letter enclosed.)
10. Peoria, Ill.	105,087	Since	. . . . .
11. Gary, Indiana	111,719	Since	Better than semi-annual
12. Kansas City, Kans.	121,458	Before	. . . . .
13. Fall River, Mass.	115,428	Before	Change made 25 yrs. ago
14. Lowell, Mass.	101,389	Before	. . . . .
15. New Bedford, Mass.	110,341	Since	Grades 1-6 in order to provide for child growth, continuous progress in the elementary school
16. Somerville, Mass.	102,177	Before	. . . . .
17. Springfield, Mass.	149,554	Since	Enclos. giving reasons
18. Duluth, Minn.	101,065	Before	. . . . .
19. Omaha, Nebraska	223,844	Since	We have other techniques for a flexible program and adapting the program in the schools. The need for semi-annual promotions no longer exists. Plan was cumbersome - mid-year group never benefitted by all advantages of even year.

6/ Question 2, Questionnaire, see Appendix A
7/ . . . Indicates, no reasons given for change

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Population in 1940</u>	<u>Was plan adopted before 1938 or since?</u>	<u>Why change was made, if made since 1938</u>
20. Camden, N.J.	117,536	Before	. . . . .
21. Elizabeth, N.J.	109,912	Before	. . . . .
22. Trenton, N. J.	124,697	Before	. . . . .
23. Albany, N. Y.	150,577	Before	. . . . .
24. Yonkers, N. Y.	142,598	Before	. . . . .
25. Charlotte, N.C.	100,899	Since	. . . . .
26. Akron, Ohio	244,791	Since	We should like to do away with all fixed times for promotion.
27. Canton, Ohio	108,401	Before	. . . . .
28. Dayton, Ohio	219,718	Before	. . . . .
29. Youngstown, O.	267,720	Since	Economic reasons
30. Tulsa, Okla.	142,157	Before	. . . . .
31. Erie, Penna.	116,955	Since	Mid-year classes were too small. February admissions to grade one were eliminated in 1940
32. Reading, Pa.	110,568	Before	Because of advantages to us outweighing the disadvantages. The trend, also, at the time was toward annual promotions - result of survey by us.
33. Scranton, Pa.	140,404	Since	Economy of time and money
34. Chattanooga, Tn.	128,163	Since	Economic reasons and fewer failures when promotions are on annual basis.
35. Knoxville, Tenn.	111,560	Before	(Requested copy of the summary of completed study)
36. Fort Worth, Tex.	117,662	Since	To provide for better organization in our smaller schools.
37. Salt Lake C. Ut.	149,934	Before	. . . . .
38. Tacoma, Wash.	109,408	Before	To better balance class size and to emphasize individualization of instruction.

Cities Reporting Semi-Annual Plan -

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Population in 1940</u>	<u>Was plan adopted before 1938 or since?</u>	<u>Why change was made, if made since 1938</u>
1. Fort Wayne, Ind.	118,410	Before	. . . . .
2. South Bend, Ind.	101,268	Before	. . . . .
3. Des Moines, Ia.	158,819	Before	We are fully aware that our present policy is not good, eventually we hope to adopt annual promotions.
4. Wichita, Kansas	114,966	Before	The change back to annual promotions as recently made by some schools is harmful to pupils and false economy.
5. Worcester, Mass.	193,694	Before	. . . . .
6. Flint, Mich.	151,543	Before	. . . . .
7. Gr. Rapids, Mich.	164,292	Before	. . . . .
8. Paterson, N. J.	139,656	Before	. . . . .
9. Syracuse, N. Y.	205,967	Before	We are planning to change to annual promotions.
10. Utica, N. Y.	100,518	Before	. . . . .
11. Okla. City, Okla.	204,424	Before	Term promotion used only from primary to intermediate - to junior high - to senior high
12. Nashville, Tenn.	167,402	Before	. . . . .
13. Richmond, Va.	193,042	Before	. . . . .
14. Norfolk, Va.	144,332	Before	. . . . .

From the foregoing tabulation it will be noted that 38 of the 52 city school systems, or 73 per cent have annual promotions and 14 or 27 per cent have semi-annual promotions.

It is also worth taking note of the fact that of the 38 city systems having annual promotions not one of the responses indicated a desire to change back to the semi-annual plan. Nineteen of the city systems had changed to annual promotion in the past six years; all nine-teen had

changed from semi-annual plans. Of the 14 city systems that still have semi-annual promotions, all comments that were made (except the one saying "The change back to annual promotions is harmful and false economy."), were in interest of making a change from semi-annual or to some plan that abolishes all fixed time for promotion, or a plan that promotes only at three points during the child's progress through grades one to twelve inclusive.

At the time of this investigation, pupils in Syracuse, N. Y. were being promoted on the semi-annual basis. Since the questionnaire responses have been tabulated, word has been received that they have changed to an annual plan of pupil promotion.

If these data had been collected from these city school systems in 1938 (the year of the study made by the National Education Association Research Division) the results would have been: 33 of the cities or 36.46 per cent with semi-annual promotion plans and 19 or 36.54 per cent with annual promotion plans.

Therefore, since 1938, a period of six years, 19 of these city systems have changed from semi-annual promotion plans to the annual promotion plan. In the past six years the trend in the above named cities has been toward annual promotions; 36.54 per cent had annual promotions in 1938 and 73.07 per cent had annual promotion plans in 1944; a change of 36.53 per cent toward annual promotions.

Report of Study of Promotional Practices

In The City School Systems in Virginia

In order to make this study as meaningful as possible, a questionnaire was mailed to each of the 24 urban school systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia, regardless of population, and the results tabulated as in the preceding study of the large cities throughout the United States.

The cities of Virginia are listed according to size, the largest in each list appearing first, the next largest next, and on down in that order to the smallest appearing last in each list.

Cities Reporting The Annual Plan -

<u>Name of city</u>	<u>Population in 1940</u>	<u>Was plan adopted before 1938 or since?</u>	<u>Why change was made, if made since 1938</u>
1. Alexandria	33,523	Since	Reduction of clerical work and lack of need of more frequent check-up. Have mid-term entry.
2. Danville	32,749	Since	(Letter supporting annual)
3. Charlottesville	19,400	Since	Smother administration
4. Staunton	13,337	Before	. . . . .
5. Winchester	12,095	Before	. . . . .
6. Suffolk	11,343	Since	Few entrants in mid-term
7. Martinsville	10,080	Since	Simplified administrative problems. More balanced grades, reduced cost
8. Bristol	9,768	Since	More efficient; saves time at mid-term
9. Hopewell	8,678	Since	. . . . .
10. Radford	6,990	Before	. . . . .
11. Buena Vista	4,335	Before	. . . . .
12. Williamsburg	3,942	Before	Less than a year is too short a time for a teacher to work with a group of pupils.

Cities Reporting The Semi-Annual Plan -

<u>Name of city</u>	<u>Population in 1940</u>	<u>Was plan adopted before 1938 or since?</u>	<u>Why change was made, if made since 1938</u>
1. Richmond	193,042	Before	Would like to go to annual promotion but high school teachers oppose the change
2. Norfolk	144,332	Before	Interested in abandoning semi-annual plan
3. Roanoke	69,287	Before	While they have semi-annual promotion in the elementary grades most of the "adjustments" or failures are made at end of session. An occasional "adjustment" - move back or forward - is made at any time when deemed best for the child.
4. Portsmouth	50,745	Before	No serious disadvantage except administration and economy
5. Lynchburg	44,541	Before	. . . . .
6. Newport News	37,076	Before	. . . . .
7. Petersburg	30,631	Before	. . . . .
8. Fredericksburg	10,066	Before	. . . . .
9. Harrisonburg	8,768	Before	Have 1 year kindergarten, 3 years in grades, 4 years in high school. Expensive, but worth it.
10. South Norfolk	8,038	Before	Superintendent is personally in favor of annual promotions.
11. Clifton Forge	6,461	Before	. . . . .
12. Hampton	5,898	Before	. . . . .

Analysis of the Virginia Responses - Of the 24 city

school systems in the State, 12 or 50 per cent have annual promotion plans and 12, or 50 per cent have semi-annual plans of promotion. The six largest cities of the State have the semi-annual plan of promotion. Six of the school

systems that have the semi-annual plan expressed an interest in changing the plan, or expressed dissatisfaction with it; four of these were among the six largest cities in the State.

If these data had been collected in 1938, the results would have been 5 or 21 per cent of the cities with the annual plan and 19 or 79 per cent with the semi-annual plan. Since 1938, a period of six years, 7 of the 24 cities changed from the semi-annual to the annual plan. This indicates a change of 29 per cent toward annual promotion, and a definite trend away from the semi-annual plan in the cities of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Advantages and Disadvantages Claimed

For The Annual Plan

In all of the studies evidence was sought to show why promotion practices should be changed or retained as they were. The responses to the questionnaires were analyzed for the purpose of discerning advantages and disadvantages of each plan of promotion. The results of this analysis are as follows:

Advantages of the Annual Plan -

1. Teacher remains with her class longer
2. Teacher gets to know her pupils better
3. School is reorganized only once a year
4. Teacher can do more for pupils she knows longer
5. Classes are more nearly normal in size

6. Time and energy are saved with one promotion per year
7. A better and broader school program may be planned
8. Mid-year classes lose a good deal over the long summer vacation period
9. Fewer adjustments are necessary for children and teachers
10. There is a decrease of proportion of failures
11. Having two or more grades in one room is avoided
12. Guidance work is simplified
13. Record keeping for clerks and teachers is simplified
14. There is economy in supplies and books
15. There are greater opportunities for individualized instruction
16. There are fewer sections per teacher
17. Teachers are discouraged from giving failing marks
18. There is a longer readiness period
19. There is an unbroken curriculum sequence
20. Teacher has extended opportunity to study child
21. Teacher has better opportunity to adjust curriculum to individual differences
22. There is a tendency to eliminate thinking in terms of grade divisions
23. Gives parents better opportunity to become acquainted with teachers
24. Permits carrying on large units of study better

Disadvantages of The Annual Plan -

1. The failing student must repeat the entire year's work
2. Semi-annual promotion leads to more homogeneous grouping
3. Semi-annual promotion plan is more flexible and adaptable to the pupils
4. Semi-annual plan offers a better balanced program for high school teachers
5. Parents like for children to be admitted to school twice a year
6. Repeat period is too long, unless remedial periods are offered for slow pupils
7. Some teachers adhere too closely to textbooks
8. Receiving students from other cities that still have semi-annual plan offers extra difficulties
9. Adjustment of failures is more difficult
10. Annual promotion becomes a time and event which is altogether too significant in a pupil's life

Conclusions From The Foregoing Studies

There seems to be a decided trend toward promotions on an annual basis. Each study reports an increased percentage of cities adopting the annual plan. A smaller proportion of the cities with a population of more than 250,000 promote pupils annually. It would seem that for the larger cities,

semi-annual promotions still provide more flexible programs; or it may be that the larger cities take a longer time to make a change to the annual plan.

School officials who have adopted the annual plan claim that with semi-annual promotions, mid-year classes are small, expensive to maintain, and overloaded with pupils who have met difficulties in school progress, that time is lost in semi-annual reorganization, that pupil-teacher relationships are broken, and that curriculum sequence cannot be planned as well as on an annual basis.

A decided trend is noticeable toward special adjustments during the school term, whether the basis of promotion be the annual or the semi-annual plan. Some school systems have adopted a continuous progress plan.

It is generally agreed that pupil progress through the grades should be measured not so much by time intervals as in terms of abilities and achievements. The plan of promotions therefore, is of less significance than the attention given to individual growth and progress.

The major reasons given in favor of annual promotions were that the pupils remain with one teacher for a longer period of time, and that the administration of the school is simplified.

The main disadvantages cited were: (1) only one entry a year for beginners causes considerable delay in enroll-

ment for some children, because their birthdays come just after the final enrollment date; (2) some difficulty is experienced in receiving pupils by transfer from other cities having semi-annual promotions; (3) it is necessary for a pupil who has failed to repeat the work of a full year instead of a semester.

Comments of superintendents from returned questionnaires of the Norfolk study have been placed in Appendix B of this report.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY OF CURRENT LITERATURE ON ANNUAL AND SEMI-ANNUAL PROMOTIONS

A survey of current educational literature shows that writers are interested in the annual promotion plan. Education journals, magazines, yearbooks, monographs, and professional books contain articles favoring the annual plan of promotion, while articles on the semi-annual plan are seldom found.

An analysis of the views of the authors consulted for this paper has been made and the points stressed by them arranged in the order of frequency of mention; the points most frequently mentioned are placed first in the list and the others follow in their respective order of frequency.

The statements which follow are submitted as evidence to support following a plan of annual promotion:

Psychological Service - Due to better systems of record-keeping, in schools, better measuring devices, and the availability of psychologists and hygienists, the "grade standard" idea is no longer needed.

The standards and forms developed by Strayer and Engelhardt in 1919 have been generally accepted. This has resulted in more general agreement on standards and forms and marked increase in the amount of comparable data on

the progress of pupils. Psychologists and mental hygienists have caused more critical consideration of prevailing theories and practices of regulating pupil progress.

Two theories underlie regulation of pupil progress: Grade Standards and Equalization of Educational Opportunity. The latter concept has gradually been gaining headway in the thinking of educational leaders since about 1910. Whatever a pupil's achievement, it is the responsibility of the school to adjust the work of each grade to his needs. In a school where "equalization of educational opportunity" is followed, adjustments are made each day as the need arises. The promotion period simply becomes the time to outline with somewhat greater detail the program judged most profitable for the pupil, as he takes the next step in his educational program.

On this topic Willard G. Klabree says: ^{1/}

"Fortunately this practice (grade standard) is rapidly losing ground and a more common procedure now is to allow the principal and teacher to determine the assignment of pupils on the basis of their own subjective judgments and on the results of standardized tests. 'Grade Standard' concept is referred to as the 'step-ladder' concept, the sacred theory. The school year has been divided into smaller segments of one-fourth or one-half to take care of repeaters. These plans have largely failed to accomplish their purpose but have made school administration more difficult. Departmentalized instruction has been under attack, because of its emphasis on

^{1/} Klabree, Willard G. Pupil Progress in Elementary School. Bureau of Pub., Teachers College, N.Y. 1943

subject-matter and its failure to consider the child as a whole."

In addition to Elsbree, the others who stress this point are: Caswell^{2/}, Lane^{3/}, Strang and Hatcher^{4/}, Farley^{5/} Washburn^{6/}, and the Eleventh Yearbook of the Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction of the National Education Association.^{7/}

Equalization of Opportunity - Educational opportunity and adjustment of the school to the pupil's needs, regardless of his achievement are supported by Caswell^{2/}, Farley^{5/} Washburn^{6/}, and Elsbree.^{8/}

Continuity of Growth - The growth of the child and progress according to the individual's ability are points mentioned by Burke^{9/}, Lemmel^{10/}, Otto^{11/}, and the Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the

2/ Caswell, L. Hollis. Education in The Elementary School. Columbia University, New York, 1942.

3/ Lane, Robert Hill, The Teacher In The Modern Elementary School. Los Angeles, California, 1941. p. 61.

4/ Strang, Ruth, and Hatcher, Latham. Child Development And Guidance in Rural Schools. Harper & Bros., N.Y. 1943. p. 69.

5/ Farley, Eugene S. The Influence of Grading and Promotional Policies Upon Pupil Development. National Elementary Principal, July 1937. pages 268-274.

6/ Washburn, Carleton, Adjusting the School to the Child. World Book Co., New York City, 1932. pages 156-157.

7/ National Education Association, Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction. Co-operation Principles and Practices. Eleventh Yearbook. Washington, D. C. : 1939; page 71.

8/ Elsbree, op. cit.

9/ Burke, Regina C. M. "The New York Annual Promotion Program." American School Board Journal 137: 42, 57; December 1943.

10/ Lemmel, H. H. "Changed Promotion Policy." School Executive 62: 21, 40; October 1942

11/ Otto, Henry John. Promotion Policies and Practices in Elementary Schools. Edu. Mono. No. 5. Minneapolis, Minn. Educational Test Bureau (720 Wash. Ave., S. E.) 1935.

^{12/}
Commonwealth of Virginia.

Financial Saving - Gustave A. Feingold, principal of a high school in Hartford, Connecticut, reports that the annual promotion system has reduced the current educational expenditures by approximately three per cent in the Hartford high schools:^{13/}

"On the expense side, the one hundred fifty-one-half year subject failures represent nineteen pupils carrying four full subjects for a whole year. Deducting this number from the equivalent of seventy-two fully scheduled pupils who were saved from repeating their entire year's work by the annual promotion set-up, gives a net saving of nine thousand seven hundred fifty-two dollars in expense where the per capita cost of secondary school instruction is approximately one hundred eighty-four dollars a year. If we note the fact that the total number of pupils enrolled in the Hartford secondary schools, Grades IX-XII, in 1937 was eight thousand three hundred fifty-two, the proportionate saving resulting from the adoption of the annual promotion plan was equal to the educational cost of two hundred forty-six pupils, or forty-five thousand two hundred sixty-four dollars, which is quite a sizeable sum in the budget of a high school system (embracing grades IX-XII only) amounting to approximately one million five hundred thirty-six thousand dollars."

Financial saving is one of the points in the conclusions reached as result of the National Education Association's American Association of School Administrators study

^{12/} Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 51th Accompanying Documents; School Year 1937-1938; pages 15-16.
^{13/} Feingold, Gustave A. "Promotional Plans and School Efficiency, "Educational Administration and Supervision" 25: 162-90; March 1929

made in 1938.^{14/}

This same idea is very vividly brought out by Vernon G. Smith,^{15/} as well as by Darleton Washburn.^{16/}

Increasing Understanding of Pupils by Teachers - The fact that teachers get better acquainted with their pupils by remaining with the same pupils over longer periods of time, which is the practice under the annual promotion plan, is an advantage claimed by J. H. Lammel,^{17/} Washburn,^{18/} and, in the Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia,^{19/} we read:

"... at the annual supervisory conference, a committee working on this problem recommended that all pupils pass through the first three years of school experience before any promotion standards are applied. Such a recommendation means that no pupil would be "failed" until he had passed through the first three grades."

Improvement of Guidance Service - Better opportunity for guidance of children and more time for teachers to devote to pupil guidance and remedial work are points brought out by Vernon G. Smith,^{20/} who says "... and second, the full time of one teacher has been given to work in guidance and a considerable amount of the time of other teachers has

^{14/} Promotion Policies in City School Systems, National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, Circular No. 9, November 1938. 1201 Sixteenth Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.

^{15/} Smith, Vernon G. "Mid-year Promotion is Vasse": School Executive 59: 11-13; September 1939.

^{16/} Washburn, op. cit.

^{17/} Lammel, op. cit.

^{18/} Washburn, op. cit.

^{19/} Annual Report of Supt. Com. of Va., op. cit.

^{20/} Smith, op. cit.

been used for remedial work." This improvement is also claimed for the annual plan by William J. Hawks.^{21/}

Simplification of Organization and Administration - The elimination of double section classes, or great improvement in this phase of school work, (in which the classroom teachers themselves are very much interested), as well as a great reduction in office work for clerks and administrators are claimed by many writers; among them are J. L. Lammell,^{22/} the Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Commonwealth of Virginia,^{23/} and Vernon G. Smith.^{24/}

Non-Promotion Harmful to Pupils - Reionoehl and Ayer^{25/} propose the use of annual promotions instead of semi-annual to solve the non-promotion problem. Trial promotions are largely successful; pupils gain more rapid progress than those who repeat grades; and adjustment problems can be solved largely by both enrichment and acceleration.

The chief argument for the plan of quarterly and semi-annual promotions is that a child who fails is required to repeat only one-half or one-third as much ground as previously. This plan is based solely on the "grade standard" theory and assumes that non-promotion is a necessary means of bringing pupils up to standard. In

^{21/} Hawks, W. J. "Annual Vs. Semi-Annual Promotions; a Point of View." Nat'l Elem. Prin. 23: 19-20; June 1944.

^{22/} Lammell, op. cit.

^{23/} An. Report of Supt. Com. of Va., op. cit.

^{24/} Smith, op. cit.

^{25/} Reionoehl, Chas. Myron, and Ayer, Fred Carleton. Classroom Adminstr. and Pupil Adjustment. D. Appleton Century Co. Inc. New York City, 1940. p. 147.

schools that promote on "grade standard" theory wide variations and differences in achievement are found in the same group or grade.

Occasionally there may be an individual who can profit from the effects of non-promotion. In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, the effects of non-promotion are apt to be unfavorable. That repeated experience of non-promotion cannot be justified in any case, is voiced by Caswell,^{26/} and also supported by Strang and Hatcher.^{27/} William J. Hawks says that in his opinion, semi-annual promotions emphasize labels and classification and seem to connote an assembly-line process in education, whereas the annual plan places less emphasis on labels and gives greater opportunity for the teacher to carry out the counseling and guidance functions of education.^{28/}

Age Grade Grouping Improved - Age variation is found to be just as great in the one-half grade groups as in the annual promotion schools as shown by a study made by Otto.^{29/} This same study also showed that in annual promotion schools 13.6 per cent repeated one or more grades, while in semi-annual schools 31 per cent have had similar experiences. The per centage of children who have repeated one or more grades is about three times as large, grade for grade, in

^{26/} Caswell, op. cit.

^{27/} Strang and Hatcher, op. cit.

^{28/} Hawks, op. cit.

^{29/} Otto, op. cit.

the semi-annual as in the annual promotion schools, resulting in more over-age pupils being found in lower grades than they should be normally. Education of the whole child is the duty of the school.

More Continuous Program - The very nature of the annual plan of promotion causes fewer interruptions in the pupil's schedule, requires organization of the school and making schedules less often, and issuing of supplies and textbooks less burdensome and more simplified. Will French^{30/} notes that less time is required of teachers in record-keeping under the annual plan than under the semi-annual plan. It would permit teachers to make more individual records of pupils, even some "case studies".

Number of Failures Greatly Reduced - The annual plan offers fewer opportunities for a pupil to "fail" but as Dr. Otto^{31/} has shown there are three times as many failures in schools that have the semi-annual plan as in schools that have the annual plan; there is no such ratio as this expected and certainly there should not be so great a difference. It is also claimed by some educators that teachers will be able to pass more pupils under the annual plan inasmuch as they are with them for longer periods of time. Teachers will understand pupils better and will hesitate to pass their problem pupils on to the next teacher (unload

^{30/} French, Will. Promotional Plans in the High School. Contributions to Education, No. 587. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University 1938. 90 ;.
^{31/} Otto, op. cit.

them) without having adjusted the pupil and in most cases preventing that pupil from failing.

Gustave A. Feingold^{32/} reported that the Hartford, Connecticut schools, by adopting the annual promotion plan, not only brought about improvement in the scholarship of individual pupils and reduced the number of subject failures, but advanced almost four times as many failing pupils as it set back.

Higher Teacher Salary Schedule - Better pay for teachers can be had under the annual plan because fewer teachers are needed to teach the same number of pupils in a school and that can result in more pay per teacher. There will be fewer sections of the same grade, more pupils will be promoted, and in the high schools the graduates will not have the opportunity to remain from February to June, increasing the teaching load of the school. This view is supported by Feingold,^{33/} several of the school superintendents who commented on the National Education Association's questionnaires returned in the 1938 study of Promotion Policies in City School Systems,^{34/} And on this subject Vernon G. Smith states:^{35/}

"The financial results of the change (from semi-annual to annual promotion) have been equally

^{32/} Feingold, op. cit.

^{33/} Ibid, p. 182.

^{34/} N. E. A. Circular No. 9, Nov. 1938. op. cit.

^{35/} Smith, op. cit.

striking and are equally appealing. We are interested in the financial results not only because economies are demanded at the present time, but because if we can do an equally good job with fewer teachers, we can then pay those teachers more at no greater expense.

"In terms of cost of teachers' salaries, this decrease in the number of staff represents a very considerable saving, without the enlargement of classes beyond a desirable number. As a matter of fact, there has even been a decrease in the number of unduly large classes. Indeed, in 1937, for the first time in a long period of years, we had no elementary class larger than thirty. For the school year 1935-1936, the last year under the semi-annual promotional plan, the cost of teachers' salaries was \$170.99 per pupil per average daily attendance. For the school year 1936-1937, however, although every teacher received an increment of \$100.00, the cost of teachers' salaries was \$163.43 per pupil. This demonstrates clearly that a considerable saving was involved, without essentially larger classes or educational disadvantages; indeed, we believe with distinct educational advantage."

Approved by Parents - Most parents prefer for their children to graduate in June, instead of February; the school curricula are planned for September to June, or for September entrants. Also, college curricula are planned for September entrance and June completion is a point mentioned by J. H. Lennel.^{36/}

Lower Marks Made by February Classes - Mr. W. J. Herrell,^{37/} principal of Larchmont school, Norfolk, Virginia, in his report at the Principals' Association meeting, February 21, 1945, showed that over a period of years in his

^{36/} Lennel, op. cit.

^{37/} Verbal Report, Made at Stuart School.

school, classes finishing the seventh grade in January each year made lower average scores on achievement tests than the June classes; and the scores had a wider range than the scores of the June classes. These same pupils, who finished in January, had a higher percentage of failure per subject than the June classes had in their record for the seven grades covered in school.

More failures among mid-year entrants in the high school is claimed by the superintendent of the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, supported by actual figures from his records for a period of twelve years, with only one exception. ^{33/}

^{33/} N. E. A. Circular No. 9, Nov. 1938, op. cit. p. 6.

CHAPTER IV
PLANS FOR CHANGE FROM SEMI-ANNUAL
TO ANNUAL PLAN OF PROMOTION

A change from one promotion practice to another should be very carefully planned to be sure the children entering school for the first time are not penalized and also to guard against any hardship being placed on the pupils in the system during the time of change. Since the trend in promotion practices is from semi-annual to annual, it may be well to consider how this change can be made without undue hardship or penalty to the children in the school system.

The change may be made in any one of several accepted ways. Probably the simplest way to begin is to admit pupils to first grade in September only and promote these pupils in June only thereafter. Pupils already enrolled in school will continue on the semi-annual basis, but each September another group will start on the annual plan. In this way the annual plan will take eleven or twelve years, depending upon whether the school system is an eleven or a twelve grade system, to work through the entire system. This kind of change will entail administrative difficulties and probably cause considerable confusion on the part of teachers because some will be following the annual and some the semi-annual plan in the same school over such a long period of time.

Separate records will have to be kept for the groups in the same school.

Another way that the change could be made is to admit pupils only in September each year but when the plan is begun, set a certain number of semesters for pupils who have previously been admitted in February and are in the "B" sections to cover an extra term's work and enter the "A" sections of their new grades in September instead of in the February term. Some school systems have allowed these sections a year to do the ensuing three semester's work, and some schools have allowed more time; but all permit them to make extra progress to get in their desired places, instead of putting some back into lower sections. This idea works through grades 1 - 8 inclusive without causing difficulty in meeting college entrance requirements for time spent by pupils in the high school.

Another plan is to admit children to school for the first time in both September and in February; keep them in the primary group for from two and one-half to three terms, depending upon the individual pupil's rate of progress, and promote from the primary group to intermediate group in September only. This would initiate the plan and it could be left to work itself out year by year until the result would be annual promotion for all grades. At the same time that the change in the primary grades is made, a similar plan for the intermediate grades could be made and promotion from that group to junior high school be made only in September of each session following. By putting both primary and elementary groups on these bases at the beginning of the same ses-

ion the whole elementary school can attain annual promotion in one session and admission to junior high school will be in September only after that time.

The plans used by Springfield, Massachusetts and New Bedford, Massachusetts seem to be especially well made and carefully thought through; the writer is presenting each plan in detail, below:

Springfield, Massachusetts Plan^{1/} - Superintendent, John Granrud proposed a plan to begin in September 1939, and to work out to completion through the senior high schools by February 1944, when the last half-year class will have left the high schools. They began by having the teachers of 7A classes in September 1939, to plan the work of their pupils so that they would cover the essentials of their 7A, 8B, and 8A semesters in one year from that date. Then these pupils would be ready to enter the 9B class in September 1940.

In February, 1940, teachers of Grades 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5B, 6B, and 7B were to plan their work so that during the ensuing school year these pupils would cover the essentials of the work usually done in a year and a half. They would then be ready in February 1941 to enter the 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A, 7A, and 8A classes respectively.

^{1/} Mimeographed material - Memorandum for the School Committee; June 8, 1939. Springfield, Massachusetts.

Using this plan, the elementary and junior high schools would be entirely on an annual promotion basis in February 1941. On and after September 1941, pupils were to enter all the schools only in September of each year.

Superintendent Granrud claimed that this plan would not upset the school system very much in that only about 25 per cent of the children in the schools would be directly affected by the change, while the other 75 per cent would proceed normally in their work. The plan is based entirely on the principle of promotion. All pupils are in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, for four full years, which is important because of requirements of the higher institutions of learning. And this change does not upset the relative enrollment status of the elementary, junior high, or senior high schools.

New Bedford, Massachusetts Plan^{2/} - This plan is more carefully planned to take into consideration the various ability groups of pupils and provide for child growth on the basis of continuous progress throughout his experiences in the elementary school. This plan also permits entrance to the first grade both in September and in February, according to rules already in effect under the semi-annual plan being used. For administrative purposes, grades 1 - 6 of the elementary school are composed of two promotional units: The Primary Unit, grades 1B - 3A; and the Intermed-

^{2/} Sadler, T. M., Superintendent of Schools. "A Plan For the Continuous Progress of Pupils Through the Elementary Grades of the Public Schools of New Bedford", Mimeographed, undated. New Bedford, Mass.

iate Unit, grades 4B - 6A inclusive. Pupils enter the seventh grade in September only.

From entering the first grade to the completion of the sixth grade a plan of continuous progress is to be carried out. The plan provides for slow, normal, and rapid progress groups through the two promotional units.

The Primary Unit consists of grades 1B through 3A and pupils are divided into three groups; Slow, Normal and Rapid. The slow group takes four years to cover these three years of school work, the normal group takes three years and the rapid progress group covers it in two and one-half years.

The general plan for pupils entering in September in schools having grades 1B - 6A inclusive, would be: all of the 1B pupils entering in September are to begin at the same place in the curriculum. Gradually as the individual differences within the class become known they may be cared for in one of the following three ways: (1) In classes where individual differences do not become pronounced the entire class may move forward as a single unit. (2) In some classes grouping in two parts will be adequate. (3) Pupils in some classes show individual differences to such a degree that teachers will need to plan three groups.

The progress of the normal child should be six terms from entrance in 1B through promotion from 3A to 4B.

As the work of the first grade progresses certain children will show outstanding ability by superior

achievement. If this fine work continues throughout the first year and both principal and teacher agree that the pupils are capable of acceleration, those pupils may be placed in a faster-moving group (not double promotion) at the beginning of grade 2B. This faster-moving group may accomplish the work of the primary grades in five terms instead of the usual six. Children who are accelerated must be truly superior. If at any time a child shows a lessening of achievement he should be returned to the average-moving or normal group.

As these pupils move on through the elementary grades teachers and administrators must guard against acceleration which brings the pupil at the end of grade 6A, too young or unprepared for the 7B grade. Pupils must not suffer from unwise acceleration or the 7B teachers will have pupils promoted to them unprepared because of too rapid progress through the preceding grades. All of the primary work should be covered. In some cases opportunity will be afforded for enrichment.

Pupils in the rapid or fast learning group must have superior achievement according to the judgment of teacher and principal, supported by achievement test results. These tests may be made within the school or at the main office, or in some cases, standard achievement tests may be used. This fast-learning group takes five terms from entrance into 1B grade through promo-

tion from 3A to 4B, however there should be no acceleration the first year.

The slow learning group requires three terms from beginning of first grade, 1C to grade 2C. This rate of progress does not mean failure and repetition, but slow progress. The pupil may need to continue at this pace. This slow progress allows more time for pupils to acquire reading readiness, become adjusted to the school and gain greater efficiency in the use of oral language. This group takes three terms from beginning second grade (2C) to completion of the second grade (through 2A).

The progress of the slow learning child will be as follows: one term each for the following steps: 1C, 1B, 1A; 2C, 2B, 2A; 3B, 3A; taking eight terms from beginning first grade work through grade (or term) 3A. It is hoped that by allowing three terms in grade one, and three terms in grade two (continuous progress, not failure and repetition), that the pupil will be able to accomplish the work of the third grade in one year.

The general rule to be followed is: No pupil is to be accelerated more than one-half year in three years, but some individual cases may require a conference with the elementary supervisor.

According to the plan, the child who enters a 1C class, is advanced to a 1B class and later to a 1A class and then promoted to a 2C class. Since this pupil needs

more time to accomplish a definite amount of work than a normal child it is an advantage for him to be allowed the extra term provided in the 2C class. At the end of 1A his achievement is comparable to the achievement of a normal pupil but the slow learning pupil took longer to achieve these results. Therefore, the slow learning pupil will profit by the extra term provided in grade two. However, if teacher and principal have become convinced that the pupil has ceased to be a slow-learning pupil he may be placed in grade 2B. Individual progress shall be measured by check-up tests at the completion of definite units. Adjustments from one group to another shall be made as a result of these tests. Class progress shall be measured at the completion of units making up the work of a grade. Promotion to the next promotional unit shall be determined upon the basis of: (a) teacher's judgment, (b) city-wide tests, (c) evidence in individual cases secured by the health department, mental clinic etc., (d) pupil's health, (e) chronological age.

The Intermediate Unit consists of grades 4B through 6A and pupils are divided into three groups; Slow, Normal and Rapid (just as in the Primary Unit). The slow group takes four years to cover these three years of school work, the normal group takes three years and the rapid progress group covers it in two and one-half years.

By this plan, groups of pupils will enter grade 7B at chronological ages, 11 for the rapid-progress group; 12 for the normal progress group; and 14 for the slow group.

These ages are goals at which teachers and administrators should aim, but may not be possible of attainment in many cases. However, every pupil in the grades of the elementary school who has reached the age of fourteen years and six months, should be considered a subject for special study. These pupils could possibly be helped in a workshop class.

Progress through the Intermediate Unit for the normal child should take six terms from entrance to 4B through promotion from 6A; making 4B, 4A, 5B, 5A, 6B, and 6A, one term each semester. Progress of the fast learning child should be five terms from entrance to 4B through promotion from grade 6A; doing one and one-fifth term's work each of the five terms to complete six semesters' work before reaching grade seven (the 7B term). None of the work is skipped. The slow learning child takes six-eighths of a term's work each term, taking eight terms to cover the six semesters' requirement from entrance to 4B through promotion from grade 6A, just going more slowly each term and not repeating any term's work.

Promotion from the Intermediate Unit at the end of grade 6A shall be determined upon the basis of the same

five points that are used to determine promotion from the Primary Unit.

Adjustment classes will be needed in several schools in order to give intensive and intelligent assistance to those children who for some good reason are temporarily out of step with their class. It is designed to help the slow, over-age pupils, those retarded by illness, pupils transferred into the system who do not wholly meet the grade standard and those who show weakness in one or more subjects. The class membership should be small enough to insure careful attention to each child. It may change frequently to admit new pupils or to release those whom the teacher and principal find ready to return to their own groups. Each pupil at the time of entrance to the adjustment class, should know in what subjects he needs help. The teacher in the adjustment class is to be given a statement from the grade teacher explaining in which subjects the pupil needs assistance in order to be able to return to his own group. The pupil is not to be allowed to remain in the adjustment class too long, but returned to the regular class as soon as it is advisable.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

General Summary.

Of the fifty-four cities between 100,000 and 250,000 population in the United States that returned the Norfolk questionnaires, 36.54 per cent had annual promotion plans in 1933 and in 1944 the percentage of cities using the annual plan of promotion had increased to 73.07.

Of the twenty-four city school systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1933, only 5, or 21 per cent had annual promotion plans, but 13, or 50 per cent had annual promotion plans in effect in 1944.

There is sufficient and substantial evidence that promotion plans are changing. Even though the large cities have held that semi-annual promotions suited them better in the past, some of the very large cities have recently abandoned the semi-annual plan for the annual.

There is a definite and noticeable trend away from semi-annual promotion plans among cities, regardless of their population, small, medium or large.

The need for continuous, uninterrupted pupil progress is emphasized. "Failing" and "repeating" is very bad for most pupils,^{1/} and very few failures in the pri-

^{1/} Caswell, op. cit. page 293.

mary group who repeat the grade, learn more of the subject-matter by repeating.^{2/} Modern educational philosophy seems to be that of dealing with the child as a whole; taking him where we find him and letting him make progress as an individual, at whatever rate his ability, capacity, and opportunities permit, be it a slow, normal, or a fast rate.

The elementary and secondary schools are considered to have a continuous plan of education, and whatever affects one will also affect the other. If the elementary school makes a better program of adjustment to continuous progress in education, then, the pupils who finish the elementary program will be more able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered them in the high school.

Conclusions

There is a very definite and noticeable trend away from semi-annual promotion plans among all city school systems, regardless of size or population of the cities. The trend is toward annual promotion plans and practices.

On the returned questionnaires that were sent out by the writer, only two superintendents were enough interested in the semi-annual plan that they were using, to say anything in defense of it, and these two comments were of a very general nature. The changes made by the school systems referred to in this study, a period of

^{2/} Annual Report of Va. Supt. of Pub. Instr. op. cit. page 18.

eleven years (1933-1944), have been away from the period of promotion of less than a school year in length to one of at least a full school session or to a period of three years in length.

Educators from all geographical sections of the United States, North, South, East and West express interest in a plan of promotion that provides flexibility and smooth, continuous progress for pupils. Individual differences are taken care of by planning individual instruction of pupils by groups of varying abilities and by making several progress-groups within larger groups, such as the slow, normal and fast groups. The annual plan of promotion appears to be better suited to these practices than the semi-annual plan of promotion.

The idea of retaining a pupil in a grade for the purpose of having him "repeat" a grade failed is out of harmony with a majority of professional educators. Adjustments of pupils are to be made as soon as pupils begin to lose their expected rates of progress with their respective groups. These adjustments are to be made by the supervisor, principal, teacher and psychologist according to the needs of the whole child. The school should adjust its program to the needs of the child. Tests should be used to adjust a pupil to the place in the school that best meets his needs. The adjustment may be upward or downward in the grades or to an adjustment class or

possibly to a workshop.

A "failing" pupil is one that is not in his proper niche, one that is being given work to do that he is not ready for because of lack of adjustment to some area of his development. It may be due to failure of adjustment in any one or more of Dr. Prescott's ^{3/} six areas: physiological, affectional, society of other children, acculturation (socialization), self-developmental or self-defensive.

There is a decided emphasis on letting teachers teach children, rather than placing subject-matter first. ^{4/} The trend is more in the direction of using subjective tests and becoming less dependent upon objective tests results alone. ^{5/} Pupils should be left with the same teacher for longer periods of time than has been the custom in the past, from one to three years at a time in the elementary schools, and for at least one year in the high schools.

The plan of having only three steps called promotions in the twelve grade school system is finding favor in many schools. They promote from the primary group to the intermediate and from the intermediate group to the junior high school and from there to the senior high school.

All of this seems to call for more information about each pupil, and for better trained teachers, supervisors

^{3/} Prescott, Daniel A., Lecture at Granby High School, June 14, 1945.

^{4/} Alsbree, op. cit.

^{5/} Eleventh Yearbook, op. cit.

and administrators as well as more democratic administration of schools. The school must work better and more frequently with the home and parents of the children.

The evidence presented leads to the conclusion that according to the best thinking of educators the advantages of annual promotions outweigh the advantages of semi-annual promotions. If Norfolk city wishes to be in line with the best policies and practices of present-day educators and educational thinkers, it should adopt a plan of annual promotions. Several methods of making the change from semi-annual to annual promotion have been reviewed. The method used by New Bedford, Massachusetts could be used in the Norfolk city school system. Copies of this plan with slight variations that may be necessary could be made and placed in the hands of every teacher in the Norfolk city school system before the session begins in September. Charts of the various steps ought to accompany the mimeographed plan and the plan could go into effect in the elementary schools in Norfolk with the opening of the next school session.

The operation of a plan like this in Norfolk city would permit children to enter school in both September and February each year and would allow pupils to remain with the same teacher several terms at a time instead of just one term as is often the case at present. It would

permit individual progress of each pupil and permit more enriched programs of work and greatly reduce the number of failures. The operation of such a plan would ease the record keeping of teachers, reduce or do away with, two or more sections in one group and allow much more time for counseling of pupils by the teachers. Time lost in mid-term organization would be saved for teaching. It would reduce the work of clerks and the administrative office in handling books and supplies, in making out reports annually instead of semi-annually as is required at present. It would pave the way for annual promotions in the high schools, which could come after a period of four years of operation of this plan in the elementary schools.

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APPENDIX A

(Copy)

(Copy)

November 29, 1944

To the Superintendent of City Schools:

The Norfolk City Principals' Association has appointed a committee of principals to study semi-annual versus annual promotions of public school pupils. As chairman of that committee, I would greatly appreciate your answering the following questions about your school system:

City _____ State _____

Name and title of official replying _____

1. Are promotions of school pupils made: (Please check one only)

(a) Annually? ____ (b) Semi-annually? ____ (c) Quarterly? ____

(d) By some other plan? (Please describe): _____

2. Was the policy reported in question 1 adopted in the past six years? Yes ____ No ____

3. If "Yes" in question 2, what was the previous policy?

(Please check one only)

(a) Annual ____ (b) Semi-annual ____ (c) Quarterly ____

(d) Some other plan (Please describe): _____

4. If "Yes" in question 2, why was the change made? _____

(Use reverse of this page if necessary)

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Respectfully,

W. A. Hanson
Chairman of Committee

APPENDIX B

COMMENTS ON AND MATERIALS RETURNED

WITH NORFOLK QUESTIONNAIRES

Superintendent J. L. H. Johnson, Danville, Virginia: ^{1/}

"In earlier days, before compulsory attendance and larger interest in education, it was not unusual for 35% or more of the pupils to "fail" and to be ordered to repeat. Under these circumstances there was some justification for reclassification in mid-session of the entire school. But later, when we have been promoting from 85% to 90% and also providing more specific treatment of special cases, it has seemed quite unreasonable to disorganize the whole school in mid-session in an attempt to help the 10% or more to pass a half year's work. Then too, usually a considerable percentage of these failures failed the repeated work. Also, because of the smaller sections of repeaters in later years it was usually necessary to handle them in mixed sections.

"Whether one follows the annual, semi-annual or quarterly or periodic system of promotion, there is still the necessity for the special teaching of smaller groups within the larger groups - - if the teaching is good - - and there is the great advantage of leaving the total group a reasonably long time with the teacher who has learned their problems and their capacities more certainly.

"Moreover, semi-annual promotions, which we had until about four years ago, did not simply turn back certain pupils to have their difficulties met in their own separate groups; it mixed them up often (usually) with pupils of the more normal type promoted from the lower sections. That was particularly true in later years, when the number of repeaters would often not be large enough to justify an entirely separate section.

"While there is no system of promotion in mass education entirely satisfactory perhaps, I am confident that the highest possible degree of homogeneous grouping is desirable - whether that grouping be

^{1/} letter on back of questionnaire

within the larger group or in separate rooms. We do a certain amount of rating and grading under any system-segregation. Why not be entirely logical and, if practical, segregate so that there will be little opportunity for the inferior to become more conscious of their inferiority, by comparison, and so that the mentally superior may not develop too much the socially superior attitude. There are enough incidental school group associations to provide many general social contacts that do not challenge mentality so much as class work. And the greatest promise of social poise and assimilation for the inferior, as far as there can ever be such, lies in providing teaching situations for the less capable in which they can experience continual smaller successes and not have to be made constantly aware of the fact that other children in the group are so much "smarter" than they - can do so many things they can't do or things they can do only very poorly."

Superintendent Rawls Byrd, Williamsburg, Virginia: ^{2/}

"It seems to me that quarterly or semi-annual promotion has a number of disadvantages which outweigh any advantages they may have. Such a plan in most cases means moving groups to different teachers. Less than a year is undesirable, in my judgment, as a satisfactory period of time for a teacher to work with a group of pupils."

Superintendent Ozer Carmichael, Lynchburg, Virginia: ^{3/}

"Lynchburg has had the semi-annual plan for many years. During the past few years our principals and I have given considerable study to the question. I am still not prepared to say that a change will be made in Lynchburg, but our present thinking leads us to the belief that we will continue to give serious consideration to the question with a view of a possible change."

^{2/} Remarks made on back of questionnaire

^{3/} Remarks made on back of questionnaire

Director of Research, Charles S. Wallace, Oklahoma
City, Oklahoma: ^{4/}

"We are attempting to use the word promotion at three points only in our schools - viz. - from primary to intermediate, from intermediate to junior high, and from junior high to senior high - kindergarten, grades 1, 2 and 3 are primary; grades 4, 5 and 6 are intermediate; grades 7, 8 and 9 are junior high; and grades 10, 11 and 12 senior high. This will permit more flexibility in classification. For example, an over age pupil may be promoted from intermediate to junior high school and be required to do fifth or fourth grade work."

Superintendent John Granrud, Springfield, Massachusetts, on June 8, 1939 had the following memorandum prepared for all school committees: ^{5/}

"Annual promotions are much easier to administer than semi-annual promotions. The existing process of semi-annual reorganization consumes considerable time and energy which would be reduced by annual promotions. This is especially important in the junior and senior high schools. The semi-annual promotion plan not only means the loss of about two weeks of instruction time but it breaks the adjustment between teacher and pupils at a time when such adjustment has become effectively established.

"Greater continuity of school work is possible in an unbroken situation over a longer period of time. Subject matter can be organized and developed in larger units as the work progresses without a break from September through June. The semi-annual promotion plan narrows somewhat the scope of materials and also the methods of instruction which a teacher uses. The annual plan, on the other hand, offers much greater flexibility.

"When pupils are promoted annually a teacher has the same pupils throughout the year. There is more time in which to study individual cases.

^{4/} Remarks made on back of questionnaire

^{5/} Mimeographed information prepared for School Committee of Springfield, Mass. June 8, 1939.

Understanding better the nature and needs of pupils develops a stronger pupil-teacher relationship and results in more satisfactory school accomplishment. Many educators believe that retardation of pupils is less frequent with yearly promotions than under the semi-annual promotion plan.

"Midyear promotions often necessitate in the smaller elementary schools the organization of small classes. Annual promotions provide a more economical organization through medium-sized classes and would probably result in some saving in cost due to more effective organization. Yearly promotions would also practically eliminate the necessity of having two or more grades in a room.

"Annual promotions give parents an opportunity to become better acquainted with their children's teachers. This is particularly desirable in the junior and senior high schools where children are taught by many teachers.

"With annual promotions there are no midyear high school graduates who must wait until the following September to enter higher institutions. Preparation for college is completed in June and all graduates proceed to their advanced work in September on the same basis.

"Annual promotions are in accord with common practices throughout the State. Only three or four cities in Massachusetts retain the semi-annual promotion plan. Many important cities have shifted from semi-annual to annual promotions during the past ten or fifteen years.

"It is therefore recommended that effective September 1, 1940, the annual promotion plan be adopted in the Springfield school system."

In a personal letter from Mr. Thos. D. Bailey, Supervising Principal of the Tampa Public Schools, Tampa, Florida:

"This is the first year we have been operating on the annual promotion plan. It will require some years to eliminate entirely semi-annual promo-

ions since we did not think it advisable to attempt acceleration of all mid-year pupils or retardation of certain groups. We have been able to accelerate in our elementary schools a small group of pupils by allowing them to attend summer schools. However, we will find it necessary to continue semi-annual promotions for another four years. We felt this would be the safe procedure and would make easier the adoption of the annual promotion plan. All of our twenty-three elementary principals and practically all teachers were in favor of the elimination of semi-annual promotions, particularly in the elementary schools.

"We are experimenting this year with a plan in the first three grades of allowing for continuous progress of children without any respect for grade level promotions at any particular time of the year. We have not gone far enough with this experiment to determine its success. We feel sure our philosophy is sound if we can determine a practical method of working out certain details. We are quite sure that we prefer annual promotions, particularly in the elementary schools. Naturally, our mid-year classes in the junior and senior high schools will be greatly affected within the next four or five years so that we may automatically eliminate semi-annual promotions on the secondary level."

H. Claude Hardy, Superintendent of Schools, White Plains, New York, (1940 population; 40,327) reports in a letter to parents:^{5/}

"As you probably know, the White Plains Board of Education has voted to establish annual promotions in the local school system. The annual promotion plan was introduced last September in the Kindergartens. Henceforth there will be no beginning Kindergarten classes in the second term of any school year.

"As soon as possible annual promotions will also be established in the junior and senior high

5/ Mimeographed material presented to Board of Public Instruction, Hillsborough County (Tampa, Florida), dated March 17, 1944.

schools. This will eliminate January graduations and allow all students to enjoy the greater advantage of completing work in June and of being graduated at that time."

Following are some excerpts from a committee's report to the Board of Education of Fargo, North Dakota (population in 1940; 32,580):^{7/}

" In the Franklin School, the following time allotments are typical:

4B Language	...	10	minutes	daily
4A Language	...	10	"	"
4B Geography	..	12½	"	"
4A Geography	..	12½	"	"
4B Reading	....	10	"	"
4A Reading	....	10	"	"

"The irregularities presented above apply entirely to the so-called academic subjects of the curriculum. The effect upon the enrichment subjects, such as art and music, is not so apparent; and in the lay mind it may not appear so serious.

"The effects on instruction are obvious. Recitations must be hurried and fragmentary. There can be no time for reflective thought. The individual pupil is lost in an effort to follow a difficult schedule.

"The effect upon the first grade pupil who enters in January is psychologically bad. He enters school at a time when climatic conditions make school attendance unattractive.

"The fact that midyear classes from the various sixth grades enter the junior high schools each year carries certain complications into the junior high schools. Midyear classes, usually small, must be provided. This necessitates a greater number of classes than the total enrollment of the individual junior high schools actually justify. Furthermore, the pupil who en-

^{7/} Mimeographed material from Tampa, Fla. op. cit.

ters an institution that is already organized, and the social development that comes from junior high school activities, by virtue of having been still an elementary pupil when the activities of the year were getting organized and under way.

" The educational world is now convinced that an oversized boy in a given grade, or a boy emotionally and socially more mature than his classmates, constitutes as great a maladjustment as a boy who may be slow in his arithmetic or his geography."

Some of the points of argument and the conclusions reached by Mr. Thos. D. Bailey of Tampa, Florida, were: ^{8/}

"In the Tampa, Florida schools, the midyear classes usually enroll approximately one-third of the classes beginning in September, which makes them a minority group through school. In the elementary school practically all teachers are required to have at least two different classes, for example, 2B - 2A, or some other combination. Different groupings are necessary within each of these classes which results in a teacher not having sufficient time to devote to students enrolled in her room.

" All arguments advanced for changes in other school systems are equally true in Tampa, for example, loss of time, circulation of textbooks twice each year, short class periods, shifting of teachers at mid-term on account of increased or decreased enrollment."

^{8/} Mimeographed material from Tampa, Fla. op. cit.

VITA

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His professional experience includes that of nineteen years teaching in the Maury High School, Norfolk, Virginia, the nineteenth year as head of the department of history; and three years as principal of John Marshall elementary school, Norfolk, Virginia.